



Press Release

News Media Contact: [\(202\) 586-4940](tel:2025864940)

For Immediate Release: Friday, May 30, 2014

Energy Department Notifies State of New Mexico that 3706 Campaign Will Not Meet June Deadline

Department Also Announces New WIPP Technical Assistance Team

Washington — Today, the Department of Energy (DOE) notified the State of New Mexico that it will not be able to meet the June 30th deadline to remove 3706 cubic meters of transuranic waste from the mesa at Los Alamos National Laboratory (LANL).

"Working together with the State of New Mexico, we have made great strides in cleanup at the Los Alamos National Laboratory," said David Klaus, DOE Deputy Under Secretary for Management and Performance. "As we work to assess the conditions of the transuranic waste program at the lab, we have decided to halt further shipments until we can reassure the public that it is safe to do so. This was a tough decision to make and the Department remains committed to solving this issue and resuming shipments."

Shipments of LANL transuranic waste, which consists of clothing, tools, rags, debris, soil and other items contaminated with radioactive material generated during decades of nuclear research and weapons development, to the Waste Isolation Pilot Plant (WIPP) were suspended following the February 14 radiological event at the site. At that time, the Department began sending the waste to a Waste Control Specialist (WCS) facility in Andrews, Texas, for temporary storage until WIPP resumed operations. Shipments to WCS were halted when the investigation into the WIPP event identified a LANL drum as the possible cause.

Since 2011, the Department has completed 93 percent of the campaign, removing over 38,000 curies of transuranic waste at LANL. The remaining waste at LANL has been repacked in non-combustible containers, including metal drums and waste boxes, that are protected in domed structures with fire suppression systems at the laboratory.

The Department has also established a Technical Assistance Team of experts from across its national laboratories to perform a review of scientific and technical issues surrounding the incident at WIPP. The team will work toward a full understanding of the waste material suspected as the source of the radiological release, including its process history and how and why

the release occurred. Drawing on the expertise and experience of the DOE network of national laboratories, they will create a structured, well-planned program of sample identification and collection, data analysis, and interpretation and evaluation of the waste stream.

The Technical Assistance Team will be led by Dr. David Wilson, Associate Laboratory Director at the Savannah River National Laboratory. The team will coordinate with the Department's Carlsbad Field Office, the Los Alamos Field Office, and the WIPP Accident Investigation Board. Experts from Savannah River, Pacific Northwest, Los Alamos, Sandia, Oak Ridge, and Lawrence Livermore national laboratories have been recruited to participate on the team.

###

If you would rather not receive future communications from U.S. Department of Energy, let us know by clicking [here](#).
U.S. Department of Energy, 1000 Independence Ave. SW, Washington, DC 20585 United States